

VZCZCXRO2521  
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHAK #1239/01 1420923  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 220923Z MAY 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2210  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA// IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/425ABS IZMIR TU//CC// IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU IMMEDIATE  
RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001239

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2022  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [UZ](#) [US](#)  
SUBJECT: GOT ABRUPTLY FIRES ITS SPECIAL ENVOY TO COMBAT PKK

REF: STATE 69678

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: On May 21, the Turkish government fired its Special Envoy to combat the PKK, GEN (r) Baser, citing the general's negative public comments on the trilateral (U.S.-Iraq-Turkey) process. The GOT named MFA Deputy Undersecretary Akgunay as his replacement, signaling a continuation of this process despite evident frustration. This abrupt move may well be tied to the tug-of-war between the civilian government and the military over key policy matters. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C/NF) Late in the day on May 21, the Turkish government abruptly fired its Special Envoy on the PKK issue, GEN (r) Edip Baser. The Prime Ministry's statement (full text in para. 7) asserted that Baser was being fired for negative public statements on the ongoing trilateral process. The GOT statement reiterated the ongoing importance of the process, and named MFA Deputy Undersecretary Rafet Akgunay as Baser's successor.

[¶3.](#) (C) Baser's sudden ouster followed private exchanges May 20 between GEN Baser and U.S. Special Envoy Gen. (r) Ralston, then between the Ambassador and Baser. Baser indicated that he was planning to resign, because the process (in his view) had not produced concrete results against the PKK, no longer required a special envoy, and could be handled through normal bureaucratic channels. Baser asserted that FonMin Gul and CHOD GEN Buyukanit concurred in this view. Baser later clarified to the Ambassador that he would remain in place until mid-June, though he gave a number of interviews over the weekend indicating he thought the trilateral process was at or near its end.

[¶4.](#) (C) Baser told the Ambassador late May 21 that he learned of his firing via television, but maintained his equanimity, praised Akgunay, expressed hope that the trilateral process would continue, and said despite significant public criticism he was proud of what he and Ralston had accomplished. Baser asserted that no one in the GOT had complained to him about his work or public statements.

[¶5.](#) (C) Press May 22 reported the story relatively straight,

speculating that Baser-GOT tensions had been on the rise following alleged negative remarks about the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Baser had given to the German daily Die Welt (we are still tracking this), and also reporting a clash between Gul and Baser at the GOT's High Counterterrorism Board meeting on May 18. However, three participants in that meeting mentioned no such clash to the Ambassador in subsequent conversations.

¶6. (C) A likely explanation for Baser's sudden firing is that the GOT -- aware that Baser planned to resign soon and tiring of his statements to the press -- decided the best defense was a good offense. This may have appealed to the AKP government as it struggles to retain control over key policy issues against an ascendant military. At this pre-election juncture, no issue has a higher profile than the PKK. While Akgunay himself is an unimaginative interlocutor, his appointment places the envoy firmly under the Foreign Ministry's control and signals the GOT's willingness -- despite its evident frustration -- to continue with the trilateral process, at least for now. (The GOT had planned to name Akgunay as Special Envoy last year, and only switched to Baser when the USG appointed a retired four-star general, Ralston.)

¶7. (U) Text of Prime Ministry's May 21 statement (informal embassy translation):

BEGIN TEXT

Statement by Prime Ministry Press Office:

ANKARA 00001239 002 OF 002

In addition to the ongoing fight against the terrorist organization, efforts toward terminating PKK activities and cutting off its international links continue with an utmost importance, and those efforts continue bilaterally with the U.S. as well as in a trilateral venue with Iraq and the U.S.

Given statements on this matter by Retired General Edip Baser in international and national platforms as well as to the media, it was decided that it would be proper to terminate his duty since some of those statements might have a negative impact on ongoing efforts.

Rafet Akgunay, Turkish Foreign Ministry Deputy Undersecretary, has been appointed as Turkey's special envoy for countering terrorism. He will be the chief of the Turkish delegation during meetings with the countries mentioned and he will be a member of the High Counterterrorism Board. He will also be responsible for carrying out other duties as assigned by the Board.

END TEXT

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON